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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [LO](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: RECENT POLLS: SLOVAKS MORE POSITIVE ON NATO MEMBERSHIP

60 Percent of Slovaks Support NATO Entry

1. (U) 60.8 percent of Slovaks view the country's NATO entry as a good decision. The OMV polling agency and the Institute of Political Science at the Slovak Academy of Sciences carried out the February 3-10 poll which had a sample of 2,221 respondents. The OMV polling agency indicated mostly university-educated people, businesspeople, inhabitants of bigger towns and the Bratislava region, young people aged 18-29 and those who voted for ruling coalition predominate among NATO supporters.

2. (SBU) Comment: The Slovak public seems to be getting more comfortable with its NATO membership. Two separate polling agencies found 52 percent (April 2004) and 50 percent (November 2004) of Slovaks support their country's NATO accession in contrast to an all-time low of 34 percent support at the start of the Iraq war in February 2003. As memory of the 1998 NATO air strikes on Belgrade and the perceived NATO linkage to the run up to the Iraq war fade, Slovak public support for the institution has grown. End Comment.

Is the Glass Half Full Yet?

3. (U) Slovaks are divided into two almost equally numerous camps regarding their opinion on the direction that Slovak society is taking. An early March survey of 1,047 respondents by the FOCUS agency shows that 46.3 percent of those polled think Slovak society is on the right track. With a difference within the margin of error, 48.7 percent hold negative views of the direction taken by Slovak society. The remaining five percent of respondents were unable to answer.

4. (SBU) Comment: The FOCUS poll is a consistent year-to-year measure of Slovak perceptions of the country's well-being. Despite solid macroeconomic performance, a flood of foreign investment creating new jobs, and successful integration into NATO and the European Union, half of the oft-pessimistic Slovak population continues to doubt the long-term benefits of the government's reform program. Seven cabinet ministries are working under a grant from the World Bank to better explain the government's reform program to the general populace. Governing coalition parties realize this is a high priority if they wish to stay in power after the 2006 parliamentary elections. End comment.  
Army, President, and Police "Most Trusted" Institutions

5. (U) The same FOCUS poll found that 76 percent of respondents trust the army, 64 percent trust the president, and 47 percent trust the police. Slovaks trust both President Gasparovic personally and the institution of the presidency. The presidency consistently polls as the most trusted political institution. The last poll measuring institutional trust levels conducted in July/August 2004 found 45 percent of Slovaks trust the president, while only 14 trust parliament and 10 percent trust the ruling coalition.

6. (SBU) Comment: Institutions more involved in the policy process are more open to public criticism. Combined with a sense of permanent scandal in parliament and the coalition as portrayed in most media outlets and furthered by politicians, the relatively immune institutions enjoy much higher levels of trust. End Comment.  
THAYER

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